Fools and the Circular Structure of *King Lear*

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In *King Lear* (1606) by William Shakespeare, Lear's final address to Cordelia as "my poor fool" (5.3.304) has drawn considerable scholarly attention,[1] prompting debate over whether the phrase refers exclusively to Cordelia or to both Cordelia and the Fool.[2] Yet, little attention has been paid to the fact that the two characters who remain on stage at the end—Albany and Edgar—are themselves "fools." Albany, husband to Lear's eldest daughter Goneril, is derided by her as "a moral fool" (4.2.59) for his moral rigidity. Deceived by his illegitimate brother and driven into exile, Edgar endures by adopting the disguise of the mad beggar "Poor Tom," describing his helplessness with the lament, "Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow" (4.1.40). Although Lear's Fool disappears from the stage after Act 3, Scene 6, his absence paradoxically governs the kingdom through the figures of Albany and Edgar. This paper argues that through the presence of these "fools" who remain at the end, *King Lear* reveals a structural circularity that extends beyond Lear's personal tragedy.

Much previous scholarship has regarded *King Lear* as a linear tragedy, viewing Lear's downfall and death as the ultimate conclusion of the play. For instance, Nicholas Brooke describes the play's ending as "the absolute negation of all forms of hope,"[3] while Jan Kott emphasizes the overwhelming destruction at the conclusion, asserting that "there is neither Christian heaven, nor

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the heaven predicted and believed in by humanists . . . All that remains at the end of this gigantic pantomime is the earth—empty and bleeding."[4] Similarly, William Elton characterizes the play's final scene as "this world's end; only suffering, tears, pity, and loss," concluding that "the devastating fifth act shatters . . . the foundations of faith itself."[5] In such readings, the play is often interpreted as a complete collapse culminating in the protagonist's death. This perspective assumes a linear structure that traces Lear's personal life from abdication to death, thereby overlooking the potential for those who remain to inherit the conflicts suggested within the play as well as the repetitive or cyclical structure that the drama itself implies.

There have also been attempts to identify a cyclical structure in *King Lear*. However, such interpretations have generally been tied to Lear's personal process of redemption or transformation, or to the inevitability of his death. As a result, the idea that the play's circularity depends on the presence of Lear's Fool—or on those who are left as "fools" at the end—has rarely been acknowledged. As exemplified by A. C. Bradley's description of the play as "The Redemption of King Lear,"[6] many critics have discerned a sense of redemption or renewal in its ending. For instance, Oscar James Campbell's "The Salvation of Lear" (1948) and John F. Danby's *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949) are representative of this approach.[7] Similarly, L. C. Knights in *Some Shakespearean Themes* (1959) writes that "the mind, the imagination . . . is directed toward affirmation *in spite of everything*" (emphasis original) and thus concludes that "[f]or what takes place in *King Lear* we can find no other word than renewal."[8]

Because critical attention has focused on Lear's redemption, the structure *of King Lear* has often been described as "the Christian cyclical journey from blessing to fall to redemption,"[9] with critics emphasizing changes in Lear's self-awareness. For example, Derek Traversi regards Lear's suffering as "the necessary prelude to a species of rebirth" and interprets the play through a three-stage framework of suffering, self-recognition, and renewal.[10] In this reading, Lear's trajectory is understood as "the intense suffering... with the force of a self-revelation," ultimately culminating in regeneration.[11] Reinforcing this view, Robert Lanier Reid interprets Lear's psychological journey as a cyclical process, which he terms

the "*three cycles*" (emphasis original), comprising the "superego disabled by false sublimation," "reconstituting ego by projection," and "restoring id by introjection."[12]

Charles Nicholl's *The Chemical Theatre* (1980) similarly regards Lear's transformation as the central theme of the play. Nicholl, however, also recognizes the significance of the Fool in this process of transformation. He observes that recurring images of wheels—such as "[t]he purgatorial Wheel of Fire, the fickle Wheel of Fortune, the cyclic Wheel of Generation"—play an important role in the overall narrative flow, and concludes that "The Wheel is, in short, the pattern of *King Lear*."[13] Yet, in focusing on the alchemical aspects of Lear's transformation, Nicholl tends to overlook the play's tragic dimension. Instead, he identifies a felicitous resolution in which Lear "dies then in joy, all sorrows [are] redeemed," and asserts that "the gene of royalty has been safely delivered" by Edgar.[14]

While the focus has often been on Lear's redemption, some critics have emphasized the recurring images of the "Wheel of Fortune" within the play (2.2.261-63, 5.3.71). Northrop Frye, Rolf Soellner, Tibor Fabiny, and François Laroque, among others, have interpreted *King Lear* as a tragedy in which characters are caught in the inescapable forces of fate.[15] In *"King Lear as a Vicious Circle"* (2009), for instance, Laroque argues that the prevalent circular motifs—such as shackles and the womb—express "the idea of inescapability of the tragic circle," concluding that *King Lear* itself functions like a vortex drawing the audience into the whirlpool of tragedy.[16] In *"*Just Nothing: How *King Lear* Means*"* (2021), Bradd Shore contends that Shakespeare aimed to evoke in the audience a sense of unmet expectation at the final stage of "the Christian cyclical journey . . . to redemption" by shifting the circle's symbolism from completeness to emptiness.[17] Discussions focused on the "Wheel of Fortune" often share the view that "the downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling from innocence towards hamartia and from hamartia to catastrophe" and consequently, the play's conclusion has frequently been linked to the inevitability of death and unavoidable catastrophe.[18]

In discussions of Lear's redemption within a Christian cyclical framework or of the "Wheel of Fortune," the play's progression has

tended to be reduced primarily to the trajectory of Lear's personal life. Consequently, insufficient attention has been paid to the play's repetitive nature, its circular structure, and the role of the Fool and other characters labelled as "fools." Interpretations that emphasize Lear's redemption frequently position the Fool in a subsidiary role, as a catalyst for Lear's psychological development.[19] The Fool is often interpreted as a reflection of Lear's mind or as a witty advisor, and his involvement in the play's overall structural design has been underestimated.[20] In other words, traditional readings have tended to cast the Fool as a means of transforming Lear into a better man.[21] The significance of Albany and Edgar being labelled—or labelling themselves—"fools" has received little attention.

This article critically revisits such interpretive tendencies and seeks to illuminate a repetitive and circular pattern inherent in *King Lear* through the lens of the "fool." It demonstrates that the play's structure is circular, and that this circularity is visually emphasized through the presence of Albany and Edgar, who remain on stage as "fools" in the final scene. Even in the Fool's absence, the continued presence of these "fools" blurs the boundary between ending and beginning. Unlike the happy ending of the source materials, which conclude with Lear's restoration, Shakespeare's final scene suggests the recurrence of fundamental human flaws.

Lear Stories in Chronicles

The chronicles that serve as sources for *King Lear*, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), are fundamentally structured to record events in chronological order, presupposing a linear, temporal framework progressing from past to present. These works tend to arrange dynastic successions and political events in a causally connected and continuous manner, presenting history as an orderly progression.[22] For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth's work constructs a linear, historical narrative by depicting the royal succession as an "unbroken line of succession"[23] with "a strong sense of linearity."[24] Holinshed's *Chronicles* have been interpreted in various ways, yet it has been noted that "[e]ven when he does depart from [Edward] Hall's exact language in his 1577 chronicle, Raphael Holinshed usually does so only when he wishes to . . . rearrange material from Hall to provide a more linear

or chronological narrative."[25] In other words, both Geoffrey of Monmouth's and Holinshed portray history in a continuous and linear fashion.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's account, the narrative unfolds in a clear linear progression. Lear divides his kingdom according to his daughters' declarations of love, marrying Gonorilla (Goneril) and Regau (Regan) to the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, and banishing Cordeilla (Cordelia) when she refuses to flatter him and instead insists that "you are worth what you have, and that much I love you."[26] Lear subsequently suffers rebellion and dispossession at the hands of his sons-in-law.[27] Lamenting "the implacable progress of fate," he travels to France and seeks Cordeilla's aid.[28] He returns with the military support of Aganippus, king of the French and husband of Cordeilla, defeats his enemies, and is restored to the throne.[29] Holinshed closely follows Geoffrey of Monmouth's version and concludes with Lear's death and burial by Cordeilla in an underground tomb at the River Sore in Leicester.[30] The Lear stories thus proceed from error to exile to restoration, culminating in a peaceful reign and burial, thereby tracing a sequential and teleological arc.

The anonymous play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, published in 1605—around the same time that Shakespeare's *King Lear* was first performed—similarly maintains a linear structure.[31] In this version, Goneril's husband is changed to the King of Cornwall, and Regan's to the King of Cambria, but the drama begins with Lear's abdication and proceeds through the daughters' betrayal, Lear's reconciliation with Cordella, and the restoration of the throne, culminating in a conclusion governed by causal and teleological developments.

Thus, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Holinshed, and *King Leir* all depict the story of King Lear as a linear progression from abdication to restoration. At first glance, Shakespeare's *King Lear* appears to follow this same trajectory, as a tragic variation on the chronicle narrative of Lear. Indeed, because order is never restored and because the deaths of Lear and his three daughters—as well as those of Gloucester and Edmund, the parallel father–child pair—bring the play to a close, it has often been interpreted as an overwhelmingly bleak ending devoid of hope.[32] Yet, when attention is turned to the play's structure, a circular form emerges—one that,

rather than culminating in closure, returns at the end to its own beginning.

The Circular Structure of *King Lear*

One crucial aspect of Shakespeare's conclusion invites further consideration. When the kingdom is entrusted to Albany and Edgar, the superfluous dialogue among the survivors lays the groundwork for a new conflict over the realm. Act 5, Scene 3 thus echoes Act 1, Scene 1, creating a paradoxical circular structure in which the ending turns back into the beginning. Although critics such as John Kerrigan have noted the potential for renewed strife at the play's conclusion, this recursive movement may be read not only as a thematic echo but as part of a larger circular design that functions as the governing structural principle of the play.[33]

In *King Lear*, the survival of Albany and Edgar at the end transforms the conclusion from a definitive ending into a possible new beginning. The play opens in Act 1, Scene 1 with the entrance of the Earl of Gloucester and his illegitimate son Edmund, along with the Earl of Kent. The king's subsequent plan to divide his kingdom among his three daughters is revealed, explained as his means to "Unburdened crawl toward death" (1.1.40) and to "prevent future strife" (1.1.43). However, when Lear's youngest daughter Cordelia responds with "Nothing" (1.1.87) upon being asked to profess her love for him, Lear becomes furious, disowns her, and consequently divides the kingdom into two parts instead of three. This division eliminates the land originally intended for Cordelia, which would have served as a buffer zone, and the play repeatedly suggests the escalating discord between the households of Goneril and Albany, and Regan and Cornwall (2.1.11-12; 3.1.19-21).

Ultimately, in Act 5, Scene 3, Regan is poisoned by her sister, and Goneril takes her own life, bringing their storylines to a tragic conclusion. In this final scene, their corpses are brought on stage, and Lear enters carrying the body of Cordelia—marking the first time since Act 1, Scene 1 that Lear and all three daughters are together. Albany relinquishes all authority back to Lear, who is thereby momentarily restored to his former power. This re-creates the composition of Act 1, Scene 1; however, with two daughters

dead and Lear dying before realizing his reinstatement as king, Act 5, Scene 3 becomes a tragic repetition of the play's opening.

After Lear's death, Albany orders the bodies to be taken away, giving the impression that the play is moving toward a conventional resolution. In other Shakespearean tragedies, a character like Albany typically offers a vision of a restored social order. Yet *King Lear* deviates from this pattern. Albany's command does not lead to a traditional conclusion with funeral march, and the play ends with three remaining candidates to rule. Albany calls upon Kent and Edgar—"Friends of my soul, you twain, / Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain" (5.3.318-19)—but Kent declines the offer.

As a result, the play closes with two men—Albany, whom Lear calls "son" (1.1.41), and Edgar, Lear's godson—entrusted with the realm, recalling the initial assignment of the country to Albany and Cornwall in Act 1, Scene 1. Just as Lear's original plan to divide the kingdom into thirds collapsed into a two-part division, the proposed triadic leadership of Albany, Edgar, and Kent fails to materialize. In this way, *King Lear* presents a recurring structural pattern of three becoming two. Considering that the earlier bipartition of the kingdom led to open conflict between the factions of Goneril–Albany and Regan–Cornwall, the final pairing of Albany and Edgar inevitably evokes the possibility of renewed discord.

The tragic deaths of Lear and Cordelia, along with another possible division of the kingdom, constitute an unexpected turn for the audience familiar with pre-Shakespearean versions of the King Lear story. In sources such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Holinshed, as well as the anonymous play, the narrative concludes with a happy ending. Cordelia's army triumphs, Lear is restored to the throne, and he lives out the remainder of his natural life.

Shakespeare could have concluded the play, as in these sources and other tragedies, with the restoration of order. Indeed, the reunion of Lear and Cordelia in Act 4, Scene 7 evokes the expectation of a happy ending. This scene is profoundly moving and creates the illusion that the narrative might end here; as Susan Snyder observes, it gives the impression that the story has reached its conclusion.[34] Yet Shakespeare's originality lies in his refusal to end the play at this point, leaving the outcome of the kingdom

ambiguous after Lear's death in Act 5, Scene 3. The potential for new conflict suggested in the final scene recalls the discord between Albany and Cornwall hinted at throughout the drama and prefigures the disputes among the sons of Albany and Cornwall following Lear's reign in the chronicles of Geoffrey and Holinshed.

In these chronicles, Cordelia succeeds to the throne following Lear's death, but the sons of her two elder sisters rebel; she is captured, imprisoned, and ultimately takes her own life. Scholars have often noted that Shakespeare may have drawn inspiration from these sources for Cordelia's death in captivity, yet the subsequent events are also noteworthy.[35] After Cordelia's death, her rebellious nephews divide the kingdom. Marganus, son of the Duke of Albany, rules the region from the river Humber to Caithness, while Cunedagius, son of the Duke of Cornwall, governs the territory south of the Humber.[36] Years later, Marganus instigates another rebellion aiming for control of the entire realm, leading to a war between the cousins.[37] In these narratives, the unification of Britain under Lear and Cordelia proves short-lived, as the kingdom splits once more and disputes over unity are repeatedly enacted.

Considering the subsequent events recounted in the chronicles of King Lear, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare's choice to leave two men on stage at the conclusion of the play is mere coincidence. Taking into account the symbolic associations of the numbers three with harmony and two with conflict, this arrangement can be read as foreshadowing future discord.[38] Albany and Edgar, as the husband of the king's eldest daughter and the son of Gloucester—a loyal servant to the king—appear well positioned to assume governance. Yet, given the "history" of Marganus, the son of the figure corresponding to Shakespeare's Albany, it cannot be ruled out that a struggle for control of the kingdom awaits after the events of *King Lear*. In this way, the presence of Albany and Edgar in the play's final moments evoke the onset of further conflict, simultaneously rendering the ending a new beginning.

The Final Scene with "Fools"

The circular structure of *King Lear* is underpinned by the presence of "fools." In Act 1, Scene 1, Lear unwittingly falls into "folly" (1.1.150) and later comes to recognize himself as "a very

foolish, fond old man" (4.7.60). In the final scene, he dies alongside Cordelia, his "poor fool" (5.3.304), yet those who remain on stage are also "fools." At the end of the play, which begins with Lear's "folly," two characters remain on stage—Albany, referred to as a "fool" (4.2.28, 4.2.62), and Edgar, who identifies himself as a "fool" (4.1.40). Considering how the play's beginning and end mediate through "fools," one can argue that *King Lear* depicts a world in which intrinsic human failings are recurrent, extending beyond the trajectory of Lear's life. The presence of "fools" in the final scene thereby illustrates a structure in which the ending circulates back to the beginning.

Highlighting this circularity is Lear's address to Cordelia as his "poor fool." This line has often been cited as demonstrating the strong bond between Cordelia and the Fool, yet the Fool himself vanishes abruptly after Act 3, Scene 6.[39] When Lear loses both his throne and his household, the Fool mocks him as "an O without a figure" (1.4.183-84), which can be interpreted as a zero without a numeral.[40] It is noteworthy that while the Fool exposes Lear as empty, he himself is marked by the symbolic figure of "0."

Emerging in the mid-fifteenth century, the tarot deck grants the Fool a distinctive position as the only card assigned the Arabic numeral "0." Although Arabic numerals began to circulate among the English merchant class in the fifteenth century, it was not until the sixteenth century that mathematical manuals using these numerals were published in English.[41] Thus, for Shakespeare's contemporaries, Arabic numerals were relatively novel. In particular, "0" functioned as a paradoxical symbol embodying "nothingness," something that could not be represented by Roman numerals.[42] The fascination with the concept of nothing, instantiated in the symbol "0," found literary expression in works such as Edward Dyer's *The Prayse of Nothing* (1585) and William Lisle's *Nothing for a New-Years Gift* (1603). As Lisle writes, "Searching Arts secrets, at the last I found, / Nothing to be of euery thing the ground," the feature of "nothing" in these poems is that it is simultaneously nothing and yet neither meaningless nor void.[43] Similarly, the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599) presents a zero that is not valueless: "O pardon, since a crooked figure may / Attest in little place a million, / And let us, ciphers to this great account" (*H5* Prologue ll.15–17).[44] Here, the image of zero becoming a

million serves as a metaphor urging the audience to imagine a vast army from the modest presence of mere actors.

Like zero or nothingness, the Fool in the Tarot has been interpreted as lacking intrinsic meaning while being essential to all other entities. In one of the earliest studies on Tarot symbolism, *Le Monde primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne* (1781), Antoine Court de Gébelin notes that the Fool "qu'il n'a de valeur que celle qu'il donne aux autres, precisement comme notre zero: montrant ainsi que rien n'existe sans sa folie," that is, the Fool, like zero, possesses no value in itself but gives value to others; nothing can exist without its "folly."[45]

As William Willeford observes, "the fool is sometimes regarded as the last card, sometimes as the first, and sometimes as being outside the sequence of the cards and forming a link between the last and the first, marking the linear arrangement of the cards into a wheel."[46] In this way, the Fool in tarot is positioned outside the regular sequence and is seen as a figure that connects the beginning and the end. In the later scenes of *King Lear*, the Fool withdraws from the stage, and Lear departs with his "poor fool," Cordelia. Yet those who remain on stage are themselves "fools." This underscores a vision of the world as a "great stage of fools" (4.6.179) that does not end with the death of a single human being.

Just as the Fool in the Tarot occupies a position outside the sequence, linking beginning and end, Albany and Edgar in the final scene connect the main plot and subplots through the theme of "folly," linking the play's ending and beginning. Although Albany professes a commitment to "wisdom and goodness" (4.2.39) and positions himself on the side of reason—as suggested by his invocation to "hear reason" (5.3.83)—his conduct nonetheless exhibits elements that are curiously fool-like. Drawing on Walter C. Foreman's observation regarding the interlude-like nature of Act 5, Scene 3, I read Albany and Edgar as "fools" who shape the play's circular structure through their limited perspective and absorption in immediate concerns, catching them in an illusion of closure while catastrophe remains unresolved. Foreman refers to the 215-line scene between the exit of the captain sent to assassinate Cordelia and the entrance of Lear carrying Cordelia as an interlude.[47] He does so because the main themes of Lear and the kingdom are seemingly set aside while a private subplot unfolds.[48]

However, rather than merely sidelining the main narrative, this interlude serves to connect the main plot as well as subplots through the figures of the "fools."

Foreman does not label Albany or Edgar as "fools," yet their behavior exhibits fool-like characteristics. In Act 4, Scene 2, Albany reproaches his wife Goneril for oppressing Lear: "She that herself will sliver and disbranch / From her material sap perforce must wither, / And come to deadly use" (4.2.35–37)—correctly foreseeing Goneril's murder of Regan and subsequent suicide. Goneril dismisses him as "the text is foolish" (4.2.38), mocks him as a "Milk-livered man" (4.2.51), and later exclaims: "O vain fool!" (4.2.62). To her, Albany—preoccupied with the legitimacy of Lear's treatment during the impending French invasion—appears as "a moral fool, sits still and cries, 'Alack, why does he so?'" (4.2.59-60). Albany thus manifests both the insight of a wise fool and the lack of judgement typical of a natural fool.

In Act 5, Albany continues to exhibit foolishness alongside wise-fool qualities. His ironic remarks to Regan regarding Edmund—"That were the most, if he should husband you" (5.3.71) and "If you will marry, make your love to me; / My lady is bespoke" (5.3.89–90)—contrast with his previous serious tone and adopt a jesting nature. In Act 5, Scene 1, Albany is entrusted with the letter from Goneril to Edmund, which Edgar obtains in Act 4, Scene 6, and is aware that they exchanged "reciprocal vows" (4.6.257) and are plotting to murder him to seize power. In light of this knowledge, Albany's irony and comic behaviors in Act 5, Scene 3 can be understood not as mere foolishness arising from ignorance, but as an active engagement informed by his awareness of the situation—as that of a wise fool. Regan's response, "Jesters do oft prove prophets" (5.3.72), simultaneously mocks Albany as a fool while acknowledging the prophetic dimension of his words and highlighting their ambiguity. Furthermore, the Folio adds Goneril's exclamation, "An interlude!" (5.3.90), amplifying the scene's absurdity.

Meanwhile, Edgar, deceived by his illegitimate brother Edmund due to his own "foolish honesty" (1.2.179), is stripped of his title and inheritance, and forced into exile. Thus reduced to "I nothing am" (2.3.21), he hides in the hollow of a tree and assumes "the basest and most poorest shape" (3.2.7) to survive. Later, when

he encounters his outcast father Gloucester, Edgar continues to feign madness as a wandering beggar to avoid recognition. At this point, he characterizes his own helpless state as one in which he "must play fool to sorrow" (4.1.40)—momentarily taking on the Fool's emblematic role of exposing folly through suffering.

In the guise of a beggar, Edgar leads his blinded father and later reappears in the final act as an unnamed knight. Having defeated Edmund in combat and declaring, "My name is Edgar" (5.3.167), he seems to have reclaimed his identity—emerging from "nothing," through the "fool" to selfhood. However, as Foreman observes, "Edgar, after defeating Edmund, gets involved in his private story and Albany gets involved along with him."[49] Edgar's "brief tale" (5.3.180), which extends over forty lines despite the urgency of Cordelia's life being at stake, reveals what Foreman describes as "human incompetence and human insularity"—that is, the tendency to become absorbed in immediate concerns and to operate within a limited perspective.[50] Prompted by Edmund's line, "speak you on" (5.3.199), Edgar continues to recount Gloucester's end in vivid detail, as if all pressing matters have been resolved, demonstrating that his "foolish honesty" (1.2.179) remains unchanged even in the final act.

In this way, Albany and Edgar in the final scene, as Foreman observes, behave "as if everything were over when it's not," disregarding Lear and Cordelia's unresolved fate and acting as though it had already been settled.[51] Foreman describes their "preoccupation with their own insular desires and griefs" as "a little comedy of adultery, jealousy, and murderous intrigue," which may more broadly be termed "folly."[52] That Albany and Edgar remain as agents of political resolution does not signify the complete restoration of order or the definitive conclusion of the narrative. Rather, by acting as if the play has concluded before its actual end, these "fools," who remain at the final moment of the drama symbolize an unfinished ending—follies arising within the ending, echoing Lear's folly at the beginning.

Conclusion

Those referred to as "fools" remain on stage in the final scene of Shakespeare's *King Lear,* destabilizing the happy endings

presented in both the chronicle accounts of King Lear, which conclude with his restoration, and the anonymous *King Leir*, which similarly ends with Lear's reinstatement. In so doing, they blur the boundary between ending and beginning. This structure suggests the recurring nature of human folly and moral failure across time, giving a cyclical sense of temporality. This notion is symbolized by the figure of the "fool," whose presence depicts the world not as a site of historical progress, but as a stage on which the fundamental flaws of human nature are endlessly enacted. Even after Lear's Fool has withdrawn from the stage, the "fools" who remain ensure that *King Lear* is structured not merely as the progress of Lear's life, but as a drama depicting the unending theme of human folly. On "this great stage of fools" (4.6.179), the "interlude" (5.3.90) of the fools is always unfolding.

Notes

1. All quotations of *King Lear* are taken from William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Reginald Anthony Foakes (London: The Arden Shakespeare,1997).

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3. Nicholas Brooke, "The Ending of *King Lear*," in *Shakespeare 1564-1964*, ed. Edward Alan Bloom (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1964), 86.

4. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 147.

5. William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 334, 337.

6. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 226.

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10. Derek Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare, Volume 2: Troilus and Cressida to The Tempest* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1969), 147.

11. Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare*, 147.

12. Robert Lanier Reid, *Shakespeare's Tragic Form: Spirit in the Wheel* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, Associated University Presses, 2000), 14, 126, 128, 138.

13. Charles Nicholl, *The Chemical Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 145, 147.

14. Nicholl, *The Chemical Theatre*, 217, 218.

15. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Rolf Soellner, "*King Lear* and the Magic of the Wheel," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35.3 (1984): 274-89; Tibor Fabiny, "'*Rota Fortunae*' and the Symbolism of Evil in Shakespearean Tragedy," *Literature and Theology* 3. 3 (1989): 319-30; François Laroque, "*King Lear* as a Vicious Circle," in "*And That's True Too*"*: New Essays on* King Lear*,* ed. François Laroque, Pierre Iselin, and Sophie Alatorre (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

16. Laroque, "*King Lear* as a Vicious Circle," 219.

17. Shore, "Just Nothing," 227.

18. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism,* 162.

19. Nicholl, *The Chemical Theatre*, 176-79; A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 306; Reid, *Shakespeare's Tragic Form*, 14-16.

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25. Scott Lucas, "Holinshed and Hall," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, eds. Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 206.

26. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum (Historia Regum Britanniae),* ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 42.

27. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History*, 40-41.

28. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History*, 40.

29. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History*, 44.

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